

**Parshat Tzav**  
**Bringing Moshe To Our Seder**  
**Rabbanit Bracha Jaffe - Class of 2017**

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This week's Parasha, *Tzav*, describes Moshe's enactment of the elaborate ceremony when dedicating the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). He washes and dresses his brother Aharon, the High Priest, and all of the *Cohanim* in their many articles of ritual clothing. He anoints the *Mishkan*, all the vessels and altars, and Aharon and his sons. Afterwards Moshe guides Aharon and his sons through the steps to bring their collective *olah*, burnt offering, and *chatat*, sin offering. Moshe himself slaughters the animals, sprinkles the blood, and performs the rituals involved in bringing the *korban*.

All these actions - done by Moshe alone.

In the middle of this flurry of activity, there is one word that jumps out at us, not because of the word itself, but because of the *trop*, the cantillation note that is sung. The *trop* notes that are applied to verses in the Torah are much more than just a familiar melody. There are the basic narrative notes that tell the story and there are others that add inflection, majesty, and drama. Then there are a few special notes that draw attention due to their very rare appearance.

The word that jumps out for us in the text is *vayishchat*, "and he slaughtered", which appears three times in *Tzav*. Only once, in verse 8:23, is it accompanied by the *shalshelet*, a rare appearance of this extended and trilling note. The *shalshelet* rises and falls three times, creating a feeling of prolonged indecision or intense action.

Rav Sarotsken in his commentary *Oznayim LaTorah*, points out the following. Moshe slaughters three animals. Only once, however, when offering the second ram, the *ayl hamiluim*, does he require a large amount of blood. In this case, Moshe used the blood to anoint Aharon **and** all of his sons on their earlobes, thumbs and big toes, as well as sprinkling on their clothing all around the altar. Therefore, from a purely technical standpoint, Moshe needed to wield the knife more than for the other *korbanot*, gathering the necessary amount of blood.

Rabbi Sacks takes a different approach. He posits that the *shalshelet* calls our attention to a major internal struggle or crisis that is in progress. Rabbi Sacks explains that Moshe apparently was conflicted -- happy for his brother, yet feeling a sense of loss for something that he himself could have had. His older brother Aharon would no longer be Moshe's assistant and second-in-command, but would now assume a leadership position in his own right. Furthermore, unlike the Cohen - the priest - whose children and descendants inherit this important role, Moshe's own children would **not** automatically follow in his footsteps as prophet and leader.

Concludes Rabbi Sacks, "*Moses had to accept both facts with good grace if he was to be honest with himself. And great leaders must be honest with themselves if they are to be honest with those they lead.*"



In just a short time, we will be preparing ourselves for (one or) two long Seder nights with many steps, Halachic details, and instructions in the Haggadah. We can learn from these two approaches derived from the *shalsholet* and follow Moshe's example.

On a purely **technical** level, we must pay attention and fulfill the *mitzvot* just as Moshe did. It says many times in *Parashat Tzav* that Moshe performed 'ה' **כְּאִשֶּׁר צִוָּה ה'** "just as God commanded". We should do the same. In fact, there is even a custom of *hiddur mitzvah*, elevating the *mitzvot* on Seder night by eating and drinking *shiurim* (measured amounts) of matza, wine, and maror, all within specific amounts of time, and physically creating a beautiful setting with our best dishes, glasses and Seder plates.

On a **spiritual** level, we appreciate Moshe bringing his full self to the dedication of the *Mishkan* with thoughtfulness, good intent, and authenticity, as he did not allow any internal feelings to mar the festivity and joyfulness of the moment. We can feel God's approval on the eighth day of the dedication, when Moshe and Aharon exit the Tent of Meeting together, bless the nation, and God's glory immediately appears before all of Bnei Yisrael.

May our Seder nights be festive and joyful!

Chag Kasher v'Sameach!



*Rabbanit Bracha Jaffe serves as the Associate Rabba at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale in Bronx, NY. Her love of prayer, text and ritual deeply shape every aspect of her leadership, teaching and pastoral care. Rabbanit Bracha is a 2017 graduate of Yeshivat Maharat, following a long career as a real-time software engineer, protocol expert, and project manager.*